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# AIR WAR COLLEGE

## RESEARCH REPORT

THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

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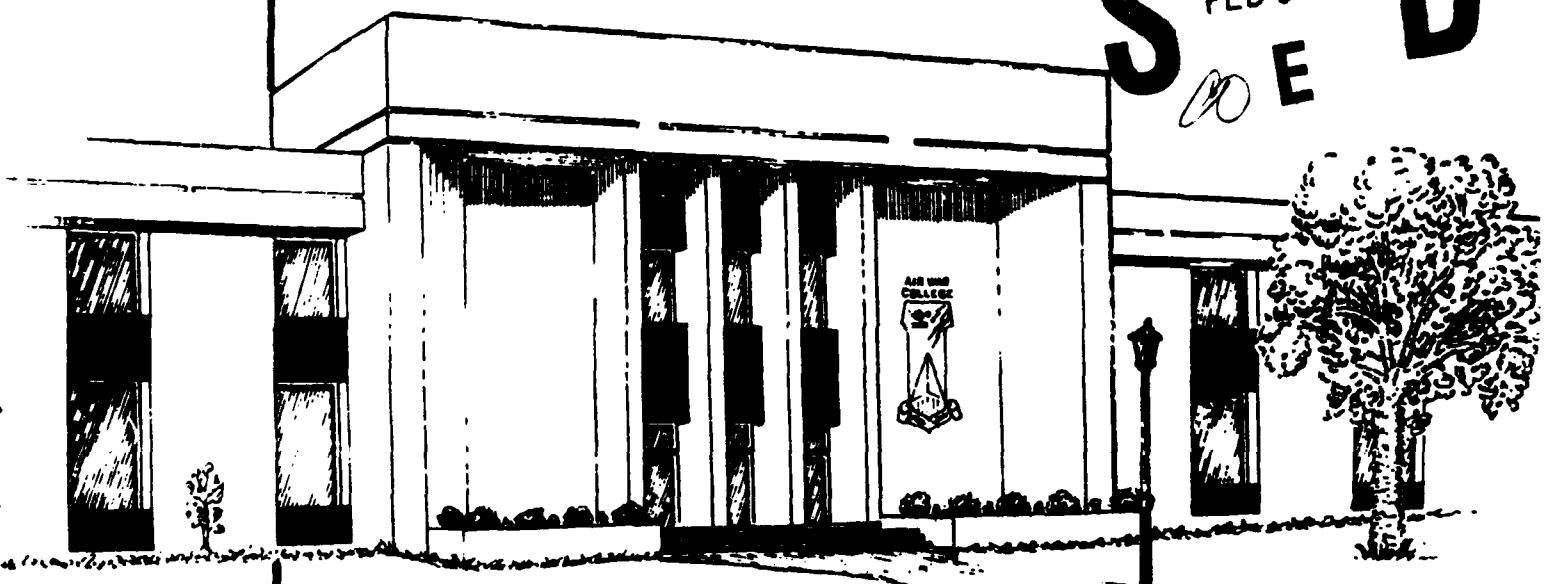
THE DESIRABLE ROLES OF THE UNITED STATES

COLONEL PYUNG HO KIM, KOREAN AF

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AIR UNIVERSITY  
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

AND

THE DESIRABLE ROLES OF THE UNITED STATES

BY

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RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

IN

FULFILLMENT OF THE RESEARCH

REQUIREMENT

Research Advisor: Colonel DENIS P. McGRATH

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

MAY 1989

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AIR WAR COLLEGE RESEARCH REPORT ABSTRACT

TITLE : THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA  
AND THE DESIRABLE ROLES OF THE UNITED STATES

AUTHOR : Kim, pyung Ho, Colonel, Republic of Korea Air Force

Since the end of the Korean War, the Korean question has been a difficult global issue in the context of a complicated regional balance of power. Soviet-North Korean military ties have increased, and the North-South Korean military imbalance continues. The current security environment of the Korean peninsula is key to the preservation of peace and stability in Northeast Asia.

This report has three major purposes. First, to describe and examine the current security environment on the Korean peninsula, with emphasis on the increased threat from North Korea. Second, to review the foreign policy of the region's four major powers, all of which have vital interests in the Korean peninsula. Third, to suggest desirable roles for the United States regarding Korean Security issues. (SDA)

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#### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Colonel Kim, Pyung Ho (BS, Korean Air Force Academy) entered F-5 flight training upon graduation from the Korean Air Force Academy in 1970. He has flown F-5 and F-4 fighters and has been assigned to operations staff positions at all levels of command. He attended the Squadron Officer School in 1975, and Air Command and Staff College in Seoul Korea, in 1981.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The Korean peninsula of Northeast Asia is located at a critical point where the interests of the continental and oceanic powers come into collision. Historically, owing to its geopolitical location, Korea has been invaded a great number of times by foreign countries. With the end of World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union agreed to divide responsibility for disarming the Japanese forces still in Korea. The line of demarcation was the 38th parallel which bisects the Korean peninsula, with the USSR in the North and the U.S. in the South. This division has lasted for more than forty years.

On June 25, 1950, the North Koreans attacked the South, signalling the start of the Korean War. Although an Armistice was signed between the U.S. and North Korea in 1953, calling for a cease-fire, relations between North and South Korea continue to be very hostile. The two are still legally in a state of war, and in the opinion of most Republic of Korea (ROK) and Western observers, another fighting war has been prevented only by a physical balance of power on both sides of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) established by the Armistice. In particular, even now, 35 years after the Armistice was signed, North Korea still has not given up its intention of unifying the peninsula by force; only the U.S. security commitment to the ROK and the stationing of U.S. troops in South

Korea have deterred North Korean aggression.

Over the years, North Korea has been responsible for a number of acts of adventurism and terrorism. Examples include the Rangoon bombing of 1983 and the destruction of a Korean airliner en route from the Middle East. In fact, South Koreans hope that as a result of the prestige gained by the ROK and the realization by the North of its diplomatic isolation, the Kim Il-Sung regime may be persuaded to participate in a peaceful North-South dialogue leading to decreased tension.

This paper has three major purposes: First, to describe and examine the current security environment on the Korean peninsula, with emphasis on the increased threat from North Korea . Second, to describe the regions four major powers' policies toward Korean peninsula. Third, to suggest desirable roles for the United States regarding Korean security.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

#### CHANGE OF REGIONAL POWER BALANCE

Since the end of the Korean War, inter-Korean conflict has developed in the context of the regional power balance among the four major powers involved, the United States, the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China (PRC), and Japan.<sup>1</sup> Because of these complicated relationships, it is very difficult to maintain peace and stability on the peninsula.

During the Cold War period after the Korean War, the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, maintained a regional power balance in Northeast Asia. By the detente period of the 1970's, China and Japan had emerged as independent regional powers and a new balance was created. The USSR increased its military forces and strength in the area while the U.S. was suffering a relative decline in military strength following the Vietnam War. Dramatic changes in Sino-U.S. and Sino-Japanese relations also affected this balance. A new quadripartite balance of power emerged, with each of the four powers deeply involved in Korean affairs.

Even though this balance maintained Northeast Asian stability during the detente era, from the ROK perspective the most alarming factor was the increasing military power of the Soviets contrasted with the waning presence of the Americans. For

North Korea, moreover, a great opportunity was provided by the Sino-Soviet split. The North Koreans have skillfully exploited this rift to play the two against each other. As China and the USSR have competed for Pyongyang's friendship, each has been pushed into providing more and better military equipment.

In the 1980's, however, the Reagan administration brought what might be called a New Cold War Era with a resumption of U.S. military superiority in the region, the remarkable improvement of Sino-American relations aimed in part at the Soviets, the strengthening of U.S.-China-Japan cooperation, and Reagan's clear intention to maintain forward deployed U.S. forces in Korea. On the one hand, the ROK gained confidence from all of these steps regarding maintenance of security on the peninsula. On the other hand, the ROK recognized a new threat - that these measures served to stimulate a Soviet military buildup in the area as well as an improvement in Soviet-North Korean ties.

Furthermore, despite the fact that the Sino-American relationship has radically changed since 1979, with economic, political and security cooperation, the two countries continue to hold different views on the military threat in Northeast Asia.

Japan's view is affected both by its concern to maintain a strong relationship with the U.S. and also by its desire to gain an economic advantage in dealing with the Soviet Union, specifically the lure of a favored role for Japanese firms in the development of Siberia.<sup>2</sup> These differing views all impact on the

maintenance of stability on the peninsula.

In this light, the Republic of Korea perceives that its own role has increased, particularly with respect to: maintenance of stability on the peninsula, the security of Japan, and political leverage possible vis a vis the U.S. to ensure maintenance of a power balance in the region.

#### THE IMPROVEMENT OF SOVIET-NORTH KOREAN MILITARY TIES

Following the Soviet disarmament of Japanese forces in North Korea in 1945, the USSR set up the communist government in Pyongyang and maintained extremely close party and state relations. During the Korean War, although the Soviets did not directly participate in the fighting, they supported North Korea with aid and materiel against a new common enemy, the United States. Today they maintain a solid partnership with a shared communist ideology and close political, economic, diplomatic and military relations.

There have been times, however, when Soviet-North Korean relations have not been as close as appearances suggested. Although a military alliance existed between the two, the intensity of their political and economic relations has varied. Following the Sino-Soviet split Pyongyang has been able to choose sides, moving towards either Moscow or Beijing when it appeared to be in North Korea's advantage. In this way Kim Il-Sung has been able to gain considerable economic and military support from both

the USSR and China. Although PRC-North Korean relations were particularly close in the early 1970's, by the late 1970's China's opening to the West, particularly its improved relationships with the U.S. and Japan, alarmed Kim Il-Sung sufficiently to incline him back to a closer relationship with the USSR, especially after the Soviet destruction of Korean Airline's Flight 007 in September 1983.<sup>3</sup> A month later Moscow diplomatically supported Pyongyang following the Rangoon bombing incident even though foreign observers do not believe Moscow knew of the plan in advance.

In May 1984, Kim Il-Sung visited Moscow and demanded increased Soviet economic and military support because of the growing U.S.-PRC-Japan cooperation. Apparently as a result, the Soviets started to supply North Korea with more sophisticated military equipment including MIG-23 fighter aircraft and SA-7 and SA-3 missiles. In return, Moscow gained overflight rights over North Korean territory. Soviet TU-16's and TU-95's now regularly fly along the DMZ and into the Yellow Sea, presumably on intelligence gathering missions aimed at U.S. and ROK forces. It is possible that they are also aimed at PRC military activities in the region.<sup>4</sup>

The USSR has also gained access to certain North Korean ports. In August 1985, a Soviet warship called at the East Sea (Sea of Japan) port of Wonsan. Shortly thereafter a North Korea naval ship called at Vladivostok. The two countries also held a joint naval drill in mid-October 1986.<sup>5</sup>

Even though some American observers believe the military ties between Moscow and Pyongyang to be more symbolic than real, many Koreans perceive them to impact heavily on security of the peninsula with political and military implications.

Politically, the most significant point to note is the increased Soviet presence in North Korea, which implies that in any future conflict, the Soviets might play a more active role than they did during the Korean War of 1950. In such a case Moscow may be able to exert greater control over Pyongyang. Closer Soviet-North Korean ties mean that Beijing's influence on Pyongyang is relatively reduced and it is likely to be more and more difficult for China to control North Korean adventurism.

Militarily, Soviet assistance reinforces North Korean military power and deepens the military imbalance between North and South Korea. In addition, Soviet reconnaissance flights across North Korea make U.S., South Korean and Japanese antiaircraft systems vulnerable and expose large areas to Soviet intelligence gathering.<sup>6</sup>

#### THE NORTH-SOUTH KOREA MILITARY IMBALANCE

For the past 35 years since the end of the Korean War, North Korea has maintained a distinct military superiority over the South, despite South Korean efforts to built up its military power. Virtually all South Koreans believe North Korean aggression has been prevented only by the strength of the U.S.-ROK combined

forces. A study group of Korean experts sponsored by the council on Foreign Relations and the Asia Society noted, "Even taking into account the qualitative advantages of the South Korea and U.S. forces, the North still has a quantitative lead in some critical areas, such as number of troops, armor and artillery."<sup>7</sup> According to the International Institute of Strategic Studies in London, North Korean regular forces number 838,000 (versus 629,000 for the ROK), with five mechanized divisions (two for the ROK), four armored divisions (one for the ROK), and a lead of approximately 3:1 in tanks (3275 for the North versus 1300 for the South). The North also maintains a quantitative lead in both ships and planes (930 combat aircraft and 432 combat vessels versus the ROK's 462 and 120).<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, North Korean forces are organized to facilitate a preemptive surprise attack with massive artillery and missile fire capability teamed with high speed mechanized equipment and extensive special purpose forces.

Dr. Yong-koo Cha, a noted Korean military analyst at the Korean Institute for Defense Analyses, points out that in recent years, "North Korea has forward-deployed some 65 percent of its combat units near the DMZ: newly activated armored, mechanized and artillery corps; increased its offensive capabilities drastically with MIG-23's, medium-range guided missiles, and armed 500-MD helicopters."<sup>9</sup>

According to former ROK Minister of National Defense Ki-Baek

Lee, the recent discovery of North Korean plans to build a huge dam near Mount Kumgang (just 10 kilometers north of the DMZ) is another new cause for military tension on the peninsula. The Kumgang dam is so large, with a water storage capacity of 20 billion tons that if broken whether accidentally or by design, it would completely flood the metropolitan area of Seoul. Former Minister Lee believes the dam is being built primarily for military purposes and could be used to flood Seoul in advance of an attack from the North.<sup>10</sup>

Over the years, U.S. and South Korean forces have discovered three large underground tunnels transacting the DMZ. In addition, it is believed that North Korea has built as many as 18 other tunnels, which would clearly be a threat to the security of the South.<sup>11</sup>

South Koreans find the examples of North Korean terrorism particularly alarming. In particular, the Korean airliner bombing incident of November 29, 1987, off the coast of Burma, indicates that North Korea is willing to use any means against the ROK, even though this brings considerable international criticism. Many South Koreans believe that the time when North Korea could successfully invade the South is about to run out, primarily because of political and economic advances in the ROK. South Korea's rapid economic growth will lead to the reversal of the superior military position of the North. Second, South Korea held a successful Olympic Games with a resulting increase in

international prestige.

The North, in contrast, boycotted the Games, and found itself isolated from international society. Third, South Korea's newly elected president and reformed democratic processes will increase the legitimacy and popularity of the government, reducing even farther the remote possibility of a proletarian revolution in the ROK.

An additional internal North Korean incentive against delay is Kim Il-Sung's often repeated goal of reunifying the peninsula during his lifetime. The Old Leader is aging, and his health is not certain. If he is to attempt to achieve his goal, he cannot wait much longer.

## CHAPTER III

### FOREIGN POLICIES OF THE MAJOR POWERS TOWARD KOREA

Geopolitically, the Korean peninsula is the strategic fulcrum of East Asia where the interests of four major powers: the Soviet Union, China, Japan, and the U.S., converge and crisscross. Therefore, in the last 100 years, three major international wars have been waged over the control of the Korean peninsula: the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, and the Korean War of 1950-1953, the last one involving the U.S. and China, among others, as major belligerents.

The Korean Peninsula is poor in natural resources, its economic well-being depends on world trade; its import and export activities depend on supply lines from the sea. The fact that South Korea controls one side of the important Strait of Korea (Tsushima), which is one of the four main choke points for entrance into the Sea of Japan from the Pacific, also enhances South Korea's strategic value.

In the 1980s, the strategic environment in Northeast Asia surrounding the Korean peninsula was fluid and uncertain due to the heightened tension in U.S.-Soviet relations, the continued Sino-Soviet conflict, and the improvement in Sino-American and Sino-Japanese relations. More specifically, the security environment on the Korean peninsula is rapidly changing because of increased Soviet military activities in the region, a heightened

Soviet concern about developments in North Korea, and an evolving de facto triple entente between the U.S., China, and Japan (to the extent that such major power relationships produce a negative impact on Korea).

#### U.S. POLICY TOWARD KOREA

The United States is Korea's most important ally, and it has certainly played a decisive role in the liberation, independence, war, rehabilitation, economic development, and deterrence and defense of Korea.<sup>1</sup> The policies of the United States in Northeast Asia are interrelated and a reflection of its larger global and regional concerns.

Broadly speaking, U.S. objectives are threefold in nature. The first is to seek to end the impression of American ambivalence and vacillation in Asia. The Reagan administration has criticized the "zigzags," "inconsistencies," and general "undependability" of previous administrations. The second basic objective is to check Soviet expansionism. The third basic objective is to reassert American leadership in the region. Through revitalizing relations with key U.S. allies such as South Korea and Japan and building expanded relations with nations like China, the United States seeks to substitute the previous U.S. "retreat" and general policy of retrenchment to a new, more activist approach throughout East Asia.<sup>2</sup>

This is immediately evident in the case of U.S. security

policies toward South Korea. In the last few years, the United States has forcefully reaffirmed its defense commitment to Korea, including its nuclear umbrella; cancelled plans to withdraw U.S. ground forces and moved to strengthen the American military presence both quantitatively and qualitatively; and maintained a forward deployment strategy to underline its commitment to Seoul's defense. At the same time, the United States has promised to rule out any bilateral discussion with North Korea unless South Korea is a full participant.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, the American strategy for Northeast Asia can be characterized as one in which the United States wants to form a "United Front" with China in order to counter the growing Soviet influence in the region and elsewhere. By forging close ties with mainland China, the United States hopes to achieve two additional objectives: no further involvement in a land war in Asia and the strengthening of the combined forces of NATO in Europe so as to redress the growing military imbalance between NATO and Warsaw Pact forces.<sup>4</sup>

Given the fact that American policy toward Korea is a function of, as well as dependent upon, U.S. global and regional strategic interests and considering the U.S. is basically interested in maintaining the status quo on the Korean peninsula, the U.S. would not like to see any sudden change in the political configuration on the Korean peninsula. What can be anticipated from the U.S., therefore, is a policy designed to stabilize the

existing status quo.

#### THE SOVIET UNION'S PERSPECTIVE TOWARD TWO KOREAS

Although Russia's ambition was set back due to its defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, its interest in the Korean peninsula began in the late 19th century as it started to look for a warm-water port. Since World War II, the Soviet Union has considered North Korea an important forward base for expanding its sphere of power.<sup>5</sup> Over the years, this relationship has fluctuated widely; from extremely close in the early 1950s, to an almost total break in the early 1960s, with variations between the two extremes from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s. These fluctuations indicate some divergence of interests and difficulties in managing differences in their bilateral relations, as well as the mutual distrust imbedded therein. However, strategic needs, as perceived by both sides, have held the two countries together.

The USSR's interests in North Korea are primarily security concerns defined in terms of the Soviet global and regional perspective. The strengthened U.S.-Japan and U.S.-South Korean security alliances and the possibility of U.S.-Japan-China cooperation directed against the USSR have augmented the strategic importance of North Korea to the Soviets.<sup>6</sup>

The improvement in Soviet-North Korean relations has been among the most significant recent developments in Soviet policy in Asia. Between 1978 and 1984, the Soviet Union limited its military

aid to North Korea to little more than supplying spare parts, but as a result of Kim Il-Sung's visit to Moscow in May 1984, followed by Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Kapitsa's visit to Pyongyang the following November, this policy changed.<sup>7</sup>

Pyongyang has now received the equivalent of at least one MIG-23 regiment and part of a second, as well as SA-3 missiles. In return, the Soviet Union has been able to conduct a rudimentary air-navy training exercise and to expand its intelligence over flights of North Korea, which until 1987 were limited to south bound flights.<sup>8</sup>

Moscow and Pyongyang also have made extensive use of joint celebrations to signify their improving relations. The ceremonies honoring the 25th anniversary of the Soviet-North Korean Mutual Assistance Treaty were highlighted by exchanges of aircraft and naval visits.

The reasons that the Soviet Union resumed military assistance to North Korea at the time when the North-South dialogue was underway are not quite clear. Obviously, the Soviet Union has been anxious to improve relations with North Korea, perhaps to offset the North's tilt toward China. The supply of modern aircraft could strengthen the North's position in the dialogue with South Korea. And improving relations between Pyongyang and Moscow may be considered necessary to prevent Moscow's exclusion from decision making on the Korean peninsula.

Because North Korea is the only ally that the Soviet Union

has in East Asia, the Soviet Union cannot afford to ignore it. Though the Soviets have failed to manipulate North Korea into becoming a pro-Soviet satellite, they have every intention of making the Korean peninsula a sphere of influence to counter U.S., Japanese, and Chinese influence in Asia. In short, Pyongyang will continue to be Moscow's most important ally in East Asia, and Moscow's role in helping Pyongyang economically and militarily will not diminish in the next decade.

On the other hand, the Soviet Union seems to be sensing fresh opportunities in its relations with Seoul as South Korea has been rapidly industrializing. When Gorbachev said in Vladivostok, in July 1986, there is a possibility for beginning the solving of the national problem of the entire Korean people; Moscow decided to participate for the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games. At the end of Gorbachev's Washington visit in December 1987, he expressed a "hope for Seoul Olympic success". And the Soviet Union, like other socialist country, invests very heavily in sports. It may signify Gorbachev's decision to seek new approaches and opportunities in Seoul. The Soviet decision could by itself function as a major stepping stone for the improvement of Seoul's relations with the Soviet Union and East Europe.

Mutual economic benefits, potential and real, between Moscow and Seoul are also significant. The Soviet Union is a major producer and exporter of most of the minerals extracted in the world, and of other raw materials. South Korea, on the other hand, while

needing raw materials produces consumer commodities. Since the beginning of the 1980s, most of the Soviet-South Korean trade, has been indirect, using Eastern Europe, Hong Kong, Japan, and Singapore. Lately, with an increasing volume of trade, they have been trading directly, but still relying on third-countries' ships.

While any improvement in political relations may be relatively slow, economic relations appear much more promising for several reasons. Both sides seem to have increasing common interests in expanding trade further as has already been clearly demonstrated. The trade has been much more direct than indirect even in the absence of political relations. From Moscow's perspective, despite several obstacles, Seoul's growing industry can hardly be ignored for Siberia's economic development. From Seoul's perspective, on the other hand, market diversification is imperative. South Korea's President Roh's "open-door" economic policy appears to be multi-directional. The already well-developed region of South Korea will be directly linked with the primary region of the Soviet Far East. Yet, in comparison with China, an active Moscow-Seoul trade development would take a much longer time. It appears far from certain how much Gorbachev's initial momentum generated by "glasnost" and "perestroika", will be sustained and enlarged. If Mikhail Gorbachev proves to be the first Soviet leader capable of reconciling the two, the Soviet Union will be able to have an advantage in the Korean Peninsula, where the four

major powers' vital interests intersect.

#### JAPAN'S TWO KOREA POLICY

Japan has benefited most from the defense efforts of Korea and the United States. Japan has been able to concentrate on economic development programs while minimizing her defense expenditures. This has made her a world economic giant. In addition, Japan has profited in a security sense. Former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger once remarked that "Americans fought and died to preserve South Korea's independence," and that "our alliance with South Korea is designed to meet an external threat which affects our own security, and that of Japan as well."<sup>10</sup> Peaceful coexistence between the two Koreas has been considered very important for Japan's security in the post Korean War period. In a number of important joint communiqus issued with the United States and South Korea, Japan has repeatedly acknowledged this linkage. Such a perception has been reinforced by the continuing tension and confrontation between South and North Korea, with little prospect for rapprochement between the two Koreas in the near future.

In view of the two Koreas' uncompromising hostility toward each other and the seemingly endless arms buildup along both sides of the DMZ, Japan regards the Korean peninsula as the most dangerous trouble spot in East Asia. More than any other major power, Japan fears the renewal of conflict on the Korean

peninsula, for such a conflict inevitably would draw Japan into it, either directly or indirectly, in light of the existing security arrangements with the United States. The U.S. guarantees the security of both Japan and South Korea. Because North Korea has ties with the USSR, a conflict on the Korean peninsula could even escalate into a major nuclear confrontation that could imperil Japan's own security.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, Japan's policy towards the Korean peninsula is based on two basic objectives: keeping the entire peninsula free from the domination of any one major regional power and leaving the peninsula divided. The first objective, of course is dictated by the strategic importance of the peninsula to Japan's security. The second objective derives from the merits of the status quo on the Korean peninsula in Japanese eyes. A divided Korea has served Japan's national interest well in the postwar period. Japan believes that such a policy is not only consonant with the U.S.-Japan alliance, but also is congruent with Japan's security interest. Other alternatives, such as violent unification of Korea under communist domination or even peaceful unification under a noncommunist regime, are not expected to serve Japan's national interest as well.<sup>12</sup> Japan accepts the reality of two Koreas and is willing to coexist peacefully with them.

As a national corollary of the Japanese-American alliance, Japan has maintained close ties with South Korea, while refusing to recognize North Korea except in case of the "cross recognition"

of the two Koreas by four major powers. In light of the refusal of both Washington and Seoul to recognize Pyongyang except in case of cross recognition, this seems natural.

Japan will cooperate closely with the United States and South Korea in promoting peace and stability on the Korean peninsula, while allowing limited private contact and economic exchanges with North Korea.

#### CHINA'S POLICY TOWARD THE TWO KOREAS

From the Chinese perspective, the Korean peninsula is a strategically important location. China fought the Sino-Japanese War in 1894-1895 and the Korean War in 1950-1953 over Korea. The General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, Hao Yufan, asserted during his official visit to North Korea on May 10, 1984 that "the Korean peninsula is situated in the land-sea vantage point of Northeast Asia and holds an important strategic position."<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, China shares 523 kilometers of border with North Korea, while the Soviet Union shares only 23 kilometers, and the peninsula has functioned traditionally as an area of conflict and an invasion corridor. Therefore, the Chinese leadership perceives Korea as a strategically important factor in China's security considerations, and China's policy toward Korea has been greatly influenced by that security consideration. That is, China wishes at the minimum, to keep Korea within her sphere of influence.

present, are based on the following premises:

The Soviet Union is the main threat to China's security.

Despite this major threat from the Soviet Union, military conflict with the Soviet Union is unlikely in the near future.

China needs a fairly long period of peace in order to modernize its economy, upgrade its industrial and defense capacity, and become strong enough in the long run to defend itself in the face of external threats.

The United States is not a threat to China's security.

The principal sources of capital and technology needed to modernize China are Japan and the United States.

To have a good and healthy relationship, especially economic cooperation, with Japan is very important. At the same time, China would not like to see the Japanese rearm themselves rapidly. A military strong Japan is not in China's interests.<sup>14</sup>

This policy, in turn, requires a regional policy toward the Korean peninsula that has three basic objectives. The first of these is to maintain regional stability and the existing balance. Any development in and around the Korean peninsula that will lead to instability the Chinese regard as adverse to their interests. Considering the peninsula as an area of tension and military buildup, China hopes that tensions will be relaxed and peaceful reunification gradually realized. Second, given the strategic importance of, and the unique set of, cultural, historical, geographical, and political ties with North Korea, maintaining

good relations with Pyongyang is crucial. Third, it is in China's interest that the bilateral relationship between North Korea and China be maintained in a way that will not adversely affect Beijing's relations with Washington and Tokyo. Thus, China's reasons for desiring stability in Korea are obvious. A military conflict would impose upon the Chinese an extremely serious dilemma that Beijing is neither willing nor ready to face. An attempt to separate politics and economics in its foreign policy has led to a rapid growth in indirect trade between China and South Korea. The total value of this indirect trade was estimated to be about \$20 million in 1979, and it increased, in spite of North Korean discontent, to almost U.S. \$3 billion in 1987.<sup>15</sup>

Besides indirect trade relations, some occasions were provided for Beijing to directly contact an unrecognized regime. The Republic of Korea and China had their first official contacts in May 1983 to negotiate the repatriation of a hijacked Chinese aircraft and its passengers and crew members to China. A British-built Trident aircraft, belonging to the Civil Aviation Administration of China, was hijacked to Korea and made an emergency landing at an air base near Chunchon on May 5, 1983. The airliner with 105 persons aboard was hijacked to Korea by 6 Chinese nationals seeking political asylum in Taiwan.<sup>16</sup>

On March 21, 1985, a Chinese torpedo boat was rescued by a South Korean fishing vessel while drifting in Korean territorial waters subsequent to a mutiny. South Korea returned the mutinous

Chinese navy torpedo boat and its entire crew, including the bodies of the six killed during the uprising, to China seven days afterward. It was the second direct official contact between the two countries.<sup>17</sup>

Chinese sportsmen also have had some contact with their South Korean counterparts in international games. China sent a team of 389 athletes to the 10th Asian Games in Seoul in 1986, and participated in the 24th Seoul Olympic Games in 1988, even though North Korea boycotted the Games.

Beijing, however, has been sensitive to Pyongyang's displeasure with Chinese contacts with Seoul, and it has made clear that China will not contact Seoul officially. Unofficial contacts with South Korea will continue, although they will still be limited in the years ahead due to the importance of China-North Korea relations.<sup>18</sup>

The primary objectives of China's regional policy is to maintain stability and reduce tension in the peninsula.

From the foregoing discussions of the strategic and economic interests of the major powers with regard to the preferred political configuration of Korea, it seems fairly clear that the basic regional policies of major powers toward the Korean peninsula are to maintain stability and the existing balance.

#### CHAPTER IV

##### DESIRABLE ROLES OF THE U.S. IN KOREA

The ultimate aspiration of virtually all South Koreans is to unify the peninsula by peaceful means. Given the current internal and external environment of the peninsula, however, their immediate hope is for peaceful coexistence between the two Koreas. Since they perceive that they are at a critical juncture regarding Korean security, most South Koreans hope there will be an opportunity to prevent the repetition of another Korean War. They would like to see peaceful competition, or better yet, cooperation between the North and the South in the hope that this would help create conditions under which peaceful unification might be possible.

Nonetheless, Koreans recognize that there is always a possibility that North Korea may persist in a policy of adventurism towards the South, particularly if it miscalculates the U.S. or ROK reaction. In this light, South Koreans regard U.S.-ROK security relations as vital and the U.S. role one that no other country can fulfil. From the South Korean point of view, it is essential that U.S. resolve or interest in preserving peace and stability on the Korean peninsula be maintained.

#### CONTINUATION OF A U.S. DETERRENCE ROLE

North Korea has not given up its intention of using military

force to achieve Communist unification of the peninsula. At the moment, Pyongyang appears to enjoy military superiority over the South. Nonetheless, the Pyongyang regime has not attacked the South, almost certainly because of U.S. involvement. Virtually all South Koreans are convinced that the strong U.S. commitment to the ROK's defense and the presence of U.S. troops on the peninsula have played and continue to play a decisive role in the security of the region. As a Korean scholar pointed out, "It is widely believed that the presence of the Second Infantry Division in the ROK is a strong psychological deterrent to North Korean aggression. Because of the location of this unit (north of Seoul in a strategic reserve position) the North Korean army could not reach Seoul without first fighting the division.<sup>1</sup>

In the late 1970's, South Koreans were alarmed at the suggestion from President Carter that some U.S. troops might be removed from Korea. Today, they continue to be concerned about possible future changes in the U.S. role in Korea. Thus even though many Americans now feel that a Korean should be appointed as the CFC Ground Component Commander, and many Koreans agree, the latter are nonetheless reluctant to have any change in the command relationship, at least in the short-term, for fear that this might mean other changes as well and may send the wrong signal to Pyongyang.<sup>2</sup>

Most South Koreans hope that the U.S. military presence and resolve will remain essentially unchanged until possibly such time

as the ROK will have sufficient capability on its own to deter (or deal with) North Korean aggression.<sup>3</sup>

#### COOPERATION WITH THE ROK'S EFFORTS TOWARD SELF-RELIANCE

South Koreans believe that after the ROK has sufficient deterrent power of its own, military tension on the peninsula will decrease. Thus one of the primary goals of the ROK is to achieve maximum self-sufficiency and a self-reliant deterrent capability. The ROK's spectacular economic growth and development leads most observers to conclude that it is only a matter of time until the ROK reaches this goal. South Korea's military sector has of course benefited from this economic growth as well as from U.S. military aid under such programs as the Military Assistance Service Fund (MASF), the Military Assistance Program (MAP) and Foreign Military Sales (FMS) credits.

In the 1980's, however, faced with massive budget deficits and an alarming trade deficit with the ROK, the United States has begun to expect that South Korea should bear a greater share of the defense burden. Military grants have been reduced or eliminated. For example, FMS credit was suspended in 1987.<sup>4</sup>

The trade imbalance continues to cause problems in the U.S.-ROK bilateral relationship with possible spillover to the military relationship. The ROK "miracle" has been based on export to the U.S. market while protecting Korean industries and services by tariff and non-tariff barriers. Trade frictions have become

highly visible and contentious. One U.S. presidential hopeful, Richard Gephardt, has made the Korean trade problem part of his campaign platform.

Koreans believe that this issue should be resolved gradually through understanding and trust between the two countries if they are to maintain their friendship in the future. From the ROK point of view, a number of concessions have already been made to American demands such as a partial appreciation of the Won, although not enough to satisfy the U.S. The new Korean administration will have to address these issues but will probably proceed slowly because of the opposition of many groups whose livelihood would be threatened by an open market.

Koreans hope that the United States will keep Korean conditions in mind and will not demand too much, too fast. Koreans look on the U.S. as a big brother and expect that a big brother should be generous and understanding towards a younger brother. South Korea faces domestic problems such as a fairer distribution of profits and labor-management conflicts with serious implications for internal stability and ultimately for external security. The ROK wants time to address these problems before causing the dislocations and readjustments that would result from radical changes to its economic system.

The ROK has the dual goal of economic development and military improvement in order to establish its self reliant deterrence against North Korea. According to Korean thinking, the

United States and the ROK should resolve economic issues with mutual cooperation, mutual respect and mutual trust based on the common objective of maintaining peace and security on the peninsula.

#### PROMOTING CONDITIONS FOR NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE

Many scholars believe that the best way to reduce tensions and achieve settlement of a durable peace on the Korean peninsula is to gradually tackle these issues in a dialogue between North and South Korea. Unfortunately, the North-South dialogue has broken off because the objectives and approaches of the two sides are fundamentally different.

South Koreans believe the North's true objective is to weaken the ROK by bringing about the withdrawal of U.S. troops,<sup>5</sup> in part by causing increased internal political turmoil and anti-Americanism. South Korea's objectives, on the other hand, are to "build confidence between the South and North and to create an international framework to safeguard its security before the question of the withdrawal of U.S. forces is addressed.<sup>6</sup> Therefore the ROK "emphasizes a step-by step process, focusing initially on economic and humanitarian issues, and on the proposals for United Nations memberships and cross-recognition of the two Koreas.<sup>7</sup>

Although the dialogue basically concerns bilateral problems between Seoul and Pyongyang, it is not immune to the interests and

influences of the major collateral powers, the United States, the Soviet Union and China.

It is not clear precisely how the Soviets and Chinese view the North-South dialogue. It appears that they do not want another war on the peninsula and it seems logical to assume that they would not oppose North-South dialogue. Nonetheless, they have not played constructive roles in the process, despite pressure and persuasion from the U.S. Some analysts feel that neither the PRC nor the USSR has been able to take an independent position on the issues because of political blackmail from the North Koreans.<sup>8</sup> Any attempt to pressure the North Koreans simply pushes them closer to the rival's camp. Thus both the USSR and the PRC have supported unrealistic North Korean demands while rejecting proposals such as those calling for cross-recognition and dual U.N. membership.

Given these conditions, any North-South dialogue needs new motivation and a more realistic approach if it is to succeed. Many South Koreans hope that the Seoul Olympic Games was the stimulus to revive the dialogue and look to the U.S. to continue to play a positive role in promoting dialogue in the following ways.

First, Washington should use diplomatic efforts to urge Moscow and Beijing to support resumption of the dialogue.

Second, similarly Washington should persuade Moscow and Beijing to use their influence with Pyongyang to revive the dialogue.

Beijing to use their influence with Pyongyang to revive the dialogue.

Third, Washington should support Seoul's renewed efforts to revitalize the North-South dialogue.

Fourth, after discussion with Seoul, Washington should gradually increase contacts with Pyongyang in an effort to get that closed society to become part of the international community of nations. The hope is that a more open North Korea will be motivated to abstain from "outlaw" actions such as terrorism and to approach negotiations with Seoul with a more positive attitude.

#### COUNTERBALANCING SINO-SOVIET INFLUENCE

If the Soviet Union or the PRC decides to wage war against South Korea to expand her sphere of influence, whether jointly with North Korea or by themselves, South Korea cannot defend herself. No matter how well South Korea may prepare herself, she cannot be a match for the Soviet Union or the PRC. The enormous power of the two communist giants can be deterred only by the strength and determination of the United States. Thus, first and most important, the role of the United States is to keep the Korean peninsula safe within the sphere of American influence and to ward off Soviet and Chinese penetration.

The Soviet Union has adopted a kind of "detour" strategy in competition with the U.S. She avoids direct confrontation with the U.S. She also does not push hard toward Japan and the West

European countries, since she knows that these nations are regarded by the U.S. as essential partners in the power competition vis-a-vis the Soviet Union, and that Soviet threat to these sensitive areas will provoke an American reaction. The Soviet Union concentrates its aggressive efforts in the periphery areas where the U.S. has little interest and influence. Angola, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Yemen, Cambodia, Laos, and Afghanistan are such areas.

South Korea has never been the target of Soviet aggression simply because the Soviet Union has regarded that it belongs to the group of nations the U.S. is determined to keep under her influence. Once the U.S. reclassifies South Korea as a periphery nation, then the Soviet Union will put it on her target list. What actually is needed for the U.S. to ward off Soviet aggression in the Korean peninsula is to emphasize her commitment to South Korean defense by keeping there a token troop strength to ensure credibility of her commitment.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

During the Cold War period, the two super powers maintained a regional power balance in Northeast Asia. By the detente period of the 1970's, China and Japan had emerged as independent regional powers and a new balance was created. The USSR increased its military forces and strength in the area. Dramatic changes in Sino-U.S. and Sino-Japanese relations also affected this balance.

Following the Sino-Soviet split, Pyongyang has been able to choose sides, moving towards Moscow or Beijing when it appeared to be in North Korea's advantage. In this way Kim Il-Sung has been able to gain considerable economic and military support from both the USSR and China. By the late 1970's China's opening to the West, and its improved relationships with the U.S. and Japan, alarmed Kim Il-Sung sufficiently to incline him back to a closer relationship with the USSR. In May 1984, Kim Il-Sung visited Moscow and demanded increased Soviet economic and military support. The Soviet started to supply North Korea with MIG-23s and SA-3 and 7 missiles. Even though the military ties between Moscow and Pyongyang appear to be more symbolic than real, many Koreans perceive them to impact heavily on security of the peninsula with political and military implications.

North Korea has maintained a distinct military superiority over the South, despite South Korean efforts to build up its

military power. Virtually all South Koreans believe North Korean aggression has been prevented only by the strength of the U.S.-ROK Combined Forces.

Geopolitically, the Korean Peninsula is the strategic fulcrum of East Asia where the interests of four major powers, the Soviet Union, China, Japan, and the U.S. collide. It is essential to understand the four major powers, policies toward Korean Peninsula, to grasp the problem.

The United States is Korea's most important ally. The basic objectives of U.S. are threefold in nature: to seek an end to the impression of American ambivalence and vacillation in Asia, to check Soviet expansionism, and to reassert American leadership in the region. American policy toward Korea is a function of, as well as dependent upon, U.S. global and regional strategic interests. The U.S. is basically interested in maintaining the status quo on the Korean Peninsula.

The Soviet Union is North Korea's most important ally. They have every intention of making the Korean Peninsula a sphere of influence to counter U.S., Japanese, and Chinese influence in Asia. Moscow's role in helping Pyongyang economically and militarily will not diminish in the next decade.

Japan's policy toward the Korean Peninsula is to keep the entire peninsula free from the domination of any one major regional power and to leave the peninsula divided. In Japanese eyes, a divided Korea has served Japan's national interest well in the

postwar period.

China's policy is largely a function of its overall foreign policy concerns. The basic objectives are to maintain regional stability and the existing balance, and to emphasize the importance of cultural, historical, and geographical ties with North Korea. It wants to maintain the bilateral relationship between North Korea and China in a way that will not adversely affect Beijing's relations with Washington and Tokyo.

In my opinion, under the current internal and external security environment of the Korean Peninsula, the desirable roles of the U.S. are fourfold.

The first is to continue the U.S. deterrence role. North Korea has not given up its intention of using military force to achieve Communist unification of the peninsula. The strong U.S. commitment to the ROK's defense and the presence of U.S. troops on the peninsula have played, and continue to play, a decisive role in the security of the region. Most South Koreans hope that the U.S. military presence and resolve will remain essentially unchanged until such time as the ROK will have sufficient capability on its own to deter North Korean aggression.

The second is to cooperate with the ROK's efforts toward self-reliance. The primary goal of the ROK is to achieve maximum self-sufficiency and a self-reliant deterrent capability. The ROK has the dual goal of economic development and military improvement in order to establish its self reliant deterrence against North

Korea. The U.S. and the ROK should resolve economic issues with mutual cooperation, mutual respect, and mutual trust based on the common objective of maintaining peace and security on the peninsula.

The third is to promote conditions for North-South dialogue. The best way to reduce tensions and achieve a durable peace on the Korean Peninsula is to gradually tackle these issues in a dialogue between North and South Korea. Washington should use diplomatic efforts to urge Moscow and Beijing to support resumption of the dialogue, and to use their influence with Pyongyang to revive the dialogue.

The fourth is to counterbalance Sino-Soviet influence. The Soviet Union avoids direct confrontation with the U.S. and does not push hard toward the nations are regarded by the U.S. as essential partners in the power competition vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. What actually is needed for the U.S. to ward off Soviet aggression in the Korean Peninsula is to emphasize her commitment to South Korea defense by keeping a token troop strength there to ensure credibility of her commitment.

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